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ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1825  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2998  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3971

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIJING 023548

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DEPT FOR AF, EAP, EAP/CM  
INR FOR GILLES  
USUN FOR PHEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AGOA](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: PRC/AFRICA: PRC SEEKS NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP  
WITH AFRICA AT BEIJING SUMMIT

REF: A. BEIJING 22370  
[1](#)B. OSC CPP20061104968073  
[1](#)C. BEIJING 22919  
[1](#)D. BEIJING 22713

Classified By: Political External Unit Chief Edgard Kagan. Reasons 1.4  
(b/d).

Summary

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[1](#)1. (C) Representatives from 48 African countries, including 41 Heads of State or Government, converged on Beijing for the November 3-5 Beijing Summit and Third Ministerial of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)(Ref A). The PRC played up its desire to forge a "new strategic partnership" with Africa through the Beijing Summit. President Hu Jintao announced an eight-point trade, investment and development assistance package for Africa through 2009, complete with multi-billion dollar aid and trade initiatives. While African Heads of State and delegates generally welcomed Hu's proposals, at least one African Foreign Minister and several other African observers lamented the absence of African initiatives. As expected, the Beijing Summit produced the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Action Plan (2006-2009)(Ref A), both largely drafted by China. Governments of the five countries that still recognize Taiwan did not send delegations to the Beijing Summit, diverging from past practices related to FOCAC Ministerials and surprising many observers in Beijing. These African governments "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people," PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said, who added that "so-called" diplomatic relations with Taiwan pose a "direct threat" to China. Septel will report on economic agreements announced during the Beijing Summit. End Summary.

Africans Turn Out In Force

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[1](#)2. (C) President Hu Jintao and the Heads of State or Government and senior officials from 48 African countries convened at the Great Hall of the People for FOCAC's Beijing Summit on November 4. The five African countries that recognize Taiwan were invited to attend the Beijing Summit as observers but chose to stay away. President Hu opened the Beijing Summit with a keynote address that was warmly applauded by a packed auditorium of more than 1,700 African delegates and observers at the Great Hall of the People. FOCAC's Co-Chair Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and African Union President and Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) President Denis Sassou-Nguesso also delivered speeches at the

opening ceremonies. Later in the day, Premier Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi convened a High-Level Economic Dialogue of Chinese and African Leaders and Businessmen. The Beijing Summit wrapped up on November 5 with two closed sessions between Chinese and African leaders where the Beijing Declaration was discussed and adopted (Ref A). The Beijing Action Plan (2006-2009), FOCAC's roadmap for Sino-African relations for the next three years, was adopted during the November 3 Ministerial (Ref A). To conclude the Beijing Summit, President Hu, Prime Minister Zenawi and Egyptian President Mubarak read portions of the Beijing Declaration (Egypt will host the next FOCAC Ministerial in 2009). Afterward, PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit held a joint press conference.

#### PRC Seeks "New Strategic Partnership"

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¶3. (SBU) The PRC sought to forge a "new strategic partnership" with Africa through the Beijing Summit. President Hu Jintao announced the centerpiece of the new strategic partnership in his key note address at the Beijing Summit, outlining a five-point political proposal to strengthen Sino-African comprehensive ties and an eight-point economic proposal to enhance China's trade, investment and development assistance in Africa (Ref B). Under the eight-point economic proposal, President Hu said the PRC will:

-- Double assistance to Africa by 2009.

-- Provide USD 3 billion in preferential loans and USD 2 billion of preferential buyer's credits to Africa over the next three years.

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-- Create a development fund of up to USD 5 billion to encourage Chinese investment in Africa.

-- Build an African Union conference center.

-- Cancel debt in the form of all interest-free government loans that had matured by the end of 2005 owed by heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC's) and least developed countries (LDC's) with diplomatic relations with the PRC.

-- Extend zero-tariff treatment to 440 items (from 190) China imports from African LDC's.

-- Create three to five trade and economic cooperation zones in Africa over the next three years.

-- Increase China's human resources assistance over the next three years to Africa by: training 15,000 African professionals, establishing ten special agricultural technology demonstration centers in Africa, building 30 hospitals in Africa, providing RMB 300 million (approximately USD 37.5 million) in grant money "for providing artemisinin and building 30 malaria prevention and treatment centers in Africa," building 100 rural schools in Africa and granting up to 4,000 scholarships per year for Africans to study in China.

¶4. (SBU) President Hu's five-point political proposal for the new China-Africa strategic partnership is expressly designed to:

-- Deepen political relations of equality and mutual trust with Africa through high-level contacts and regular, high-level political dialogue.

-- Broaden "win-win" economic cooperation.

-- Expand cultural exchanges.

-- Promote with Africa balanced and harmonious global

development, by, among other means, urging developed countries to honor promises on market access, aid and debt relief.

-- Strengthen cooperation and mutual support in international affairs through "promoting democracy in international relations" and enhancing "international security cooperation."

#### Zenawi Stresses Economic Development

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15. (C) African leaders also addressed the Beijing Summit at the opening ceremonies. Following President Hu, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi called the Beijing Summit "historic" and said the event indicated China and Africa's strong desire to intensify relations. Diverging slightly from President Hu's theme, PM Zenawi said that the Sino-African strategic partnership is not new, but has been renewed and reaffirmed by the Beijing Summit. Africa's main challenges are to fight poverty and promote peace, stability and good governance. China's peaceful development and economic success have created changed circumstances so that China can now make a marked impact. Economic development is critical for Africa and Africa seeks to attract more Chinese investment and trade. China and Africa have complementary economies. Africa historically has not had balanced economic relations with other continents. Africa and China both need peace and stability and a tranquil global environment for development. By producing one of the largest gatherings of African leaders in history, the Beijing Summit shows the value African leaders attach to the strategic partnership, PM Zenawi underscored.

#### Sassou-Nguesso Pays Tribute

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16. (C) Speaking after PM Meles Zenawi at the opening ceremonies, Congo President Sassou-Nguesso extolled the PRC's long commitment to African liberation struggles. Praising the FOCAC mechanism, President Sassou-Nguesso said that Sino-African cooperation will achieve higher levels over the next three years because China pledged support for the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the Millennium Development Goals and early resumption of the Doha round of global trade talks. Africa also highly commends

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China's active participation in international peacekeeping operations in China. President Sassou-Nguesso concluded his remarks by lauding China's "highly admirable and tremendous achievements" in economic development and paid "tribute" to China on behalf of Africa.

#### Many Impressed, Some Skeptical

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17. (C) Exiting the Great Hall of the People after the opening ceremonies, a number of African delegates said they were deeply impressed with President Hu's proposals. Delegates from Guinea, Liberia, Botswana, Ghana and South Africa all separately told Poloff that President Hu's proposals demonstrate that China intends to assist Africa on the basis of "win-win" and mutual benefit. "These are very strong proposals that can greatly help Africa," the Botswana delegate said, "and we look forward to moving ahead as partners." The Liberia delegate said President Hu's proposals are "concrete" and "action-oriented."

18. (C) Senegal Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio offered a more muted assessment of President Hu's proposals, telling Poloff that he was disappointed African countries had put nothing on the table for China. "We should also be setting the agenda," he said, adding that he hoped that the closed sessions between African and Chinese leaders would produce African initiatives. A Nigerian delegate from Nigerian State Television was more pointed, dismissing the Beijing Summit as

a "talk-shop" and stressing President Hu's agenda as "simply proposals." "The question," the Nigerian said, "is what happens practically to implement the agenda." A Senegalese journalist appearing on CCTV 9, China's official English-language channel, later echoed FM Gadio's observations almost verbatim, underscoring the absence of African proposals to balance the relationship. NOTE: While the Embassy has not received any readouts from the closed sessions between Chinese and African leaders, the Beijing Summit's concluding ceremonies and joint press conference did not indicate any specific African initiatives. END NOTE.

#### Hurting China's Feelings

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19. (C) The PRC invited the five African countries that recognize Taiwan to attend the Beijing Summit as observers, but not at the Head of State or Government level, consistent with past practices. Unlike at the 2000 or 2003 FOCAC Ministerials, no observer delegations from Burkina Faso, Gambia, Malawi, Swaziland and Sao Tome and Principe attended, a development that appears to have surprised many PRC observers (Ref C). At the Beijing Summit's closing press conference, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said that five governments with "so called" diplomatic relations with Taiwan "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people." Maintaining relations with Taiwan is "not so normal," contravenes the United Nations charter and constitutes a "direct threat" to China, FM Li contended. The PRC hopes the five African governments can return to the "correct position" and join the 169 countries and myriad international organizations that adhere to a one China policy, Li said.

110. (C) Libya, Tunisia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC) were not represented at the Head of State or Government level, contacts told us. Vice President Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombasi represented DROC. Tunisia, Chad and Cote d'Ivoire officials were unavailable, but a French embassy contact told us that domestic political considerations prevented Cote d'Ivoire from sending President Laurent Gbagbo or Prime Minister Chres Konan Banny. According the Central African Republic Embassy in Beijing, Foreign Minister Ngoupande stood in for President Francois Bozize, who cut short his trip to China on November 2 when rebels captured Birao, near Sudan. Foreign Minister Mamadi Conde represented Guinea and a Guinean delegate at the Great Hall of the People told Poloff that President Lansana Conte could not travel to Beijing due to poor health. Minister of Development and International Cooperation Mohamed Nouri Jouini represented Tunisia, according to press reports. A local Beijing journalist told us Libya sent the equivalent of an African Office Director as its senior representative. The journalist said he had been told by Libya's representative in Beijing that Libyan Head of State Qaddafi believed the Beijing Summit should have been between Asia and Africa and that China

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should not be able to group all African countries together for a "bilateral" conference.

#### Widespread Media Coverage

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111. (C) The PRC ensured widespread media access to the Beijing Summit, granting credentials to hundreds of local and international journalists, establishing a press center and busing journalists to media events. In addition to the closing joint press conference, MFA Spokesman Liu Jianchao briefed the press and fielded questions on November 3, after the FOCAC Ministerial. The MFA also organized a press conference for Sudan President Omar Bashir and press availability for Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on November 3. Daily and special briefings were also held in the run-up to the Beijing Summit (Ref D). State run CCTV 4 and CCTV 9 broadcast the opening ceremonies, the opening

statements at the High-Level Economic Dialogue, the readout of the Beijing Declaration and the closing press conference live in Chinese and English respectively.

¶12. (C) The PRC Foreign Ministry paid for many African journalists to attend the summit, putting them up for up to five days in the Beijing International News Plaza Hotel, where the press center was located. Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ugandan and South African journalists told Poloff they were pleased with the arrangements although their schedules allowed them little free time. Some of the journalists were attached to presidential delegations and some from the private sector. A South African journalist for Business Day told Poloff that while he appreciated the free trip to China, Beijing's motives were transparent: "They want the coverage to tell their story and that's it." During Liu's November 3 press conference, only one African journalist was called upon for questioning, but a number of Africans spoke up at the closing joint press conference. At least two Western journalists complained to Poloff that their access to African principals was limited by the PRC's control over logistic arrangements.

#### Africans Impressed By Ceremonies

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¶13. (C) More than 1,700 members of the African delegations, including the foreign ministers and finance ministers of most participating African countries, along with members of the Beijing-based diplomatic community and a sizable international and domestic press contingent, witnessed the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Summit at the Great Hall of the People's. On the way into the auditorium, illuminated displays touted China's involvement in Africa with photographs and historical narratives that highlighted high-level visits, Chinese medical teams and Chinese contributions to Africa's infrastructure development and peacekeeping operations. a bank of flowers covered the dais and red banners quoting the Beijing Summit's theme of "friendship, cooperation and development" hung from the balcony of the cavernous meeting hall. Jumbo video screens optimized viewing while the hosts provided simultaneous translation in Chinese, English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Arabic. African delegates were impressed with the preparations. As one Botswana delegate told Poloff, "China's development is inspiring."

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